

**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
SPECIAL MEETING OF MAY 13, 2014**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Don Francis called the May 13, 2014 special meeting of the Redevelopment Agency to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Elevator Conference Room of Rocky Hill Town Hall, 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT.

Those in attendance: James Ussery (Vice Chairman), Tom Beaudoin and Robert Britt. Also present: Ray Carpentino (Economic Development Director), Richard Vicino (Vicino Construction Services) and Various Residents of R.H.

Those absent: Patrick Dawson and Albert Levesque.

Chairman Don Francis said Patrick Dawson and Albert Levesque couldn't make this evening's meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Don Francis asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to speak. There was no one who wished to.

**3. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION: TOWN CENTER WEST: UPDATE:
RICHARD VICINO**

Chairman Don Francis turned to Richard Vicino at this point. Richard Vicino said he has an office at 2360 Main Street, R.H. He told this Commission that he had been in front of them on February 11, 2014 and he had done a presentation based on the modification to Town Center West's plan of development. He had explained that they have a contractual arrangement as to this being a mixed use site but he wants to add residential to this mixed use. This plan of development originally was proposed to be for commercial, which would be retail, office space and a possible hotel. The Zoning Regulations in this Town allow for residential in a Mixed Use Zone. He said that he had gone back to Northeast Utilities, which is the base landowner of this project. He passed out a copy of the approval letter from Northeast Utilities to the members of this Agency. (Please see the First Attachment.) This is with regards to him being able to proceed with a mixed use development that has residential in it. He said after this Redevelopment Agency gave him a "nod" for this, he then proceeded to the Inland Wetlands Commission to show them the significant reduction and impact to the wetlands.

Richard Vicino explained, like he had at this Agency's meeting on February 11, 2014, that he had been in a stalled position with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the overall retail

site for over one year. He mentioned the factors that had really impacted this. One was with regards to the amount of traffic that would be on West Street if this was to be an all retail component and have a grocery store especially. It wasn't going to be acceptable to the DOT that the queue in front of Exit 23 would be backed up. He then said the second factor was with regards to where the original driveway was. He passed out a copy of the original plan for Town Center West to the members of this Agency at this point. (Please see the Second Attachment.) The original driveway had been right across from the traffic light at West Side Market. In order for them to have that entrance, DOT told them that they would have to widen the road to the south of that entrance. That would be right in front of the Mobil gas station, which has two aisles of gas pumps. He explained that the DOT didn't own enough property there to widen the road so he said that he would have had to acquire land from the Mobil gas station to widen the road but then an aisle of gas pumps would have to be eliminated. That would be totally impossible. These two factors were worked on at meetings with the DOT and they weren't successful so he was in a stalled position.

Richard Vicino said that he then did some further investigation of what the community of retailers are doing today to make things more marketable for the overall retail tenants. Residential is being brought in. He referred to Evergreen Walk and how two hundred residential units are going to be brought in there. Glastonbury, which just passed some zoning, is going to bring approximately one hundred and fifty units of residential for the downtown retail businesses. He explained where this will be and he gave a few more examples. The national trend has been going towards retail because the big box anchors aren't around any longer seeing that people are buying more online.

Richard Vicino said he is trying to do an upscale community that will have upscale apartments. This will be similar to Alterra, which is on Brook Street in Rocky Hill. The price range is from \$1,400 to \$1,850 per month plus utilities. He said there has been discussion as to whether this type of development will have children and he said this type of development doesn't really foster children. If people are going to be spending approximately \$2,000 per month for a two bedroom apartment with utilities then they would go out instead to get a mortgage and own a home if they have children. They are finding out that the tenants there are retirees or young professionals.

Richard Vicino referred to this type of a community for both retirees and young professionals. Retirees will be able to walk to a coffee shop, for example, instead of getting into a car. Young professionals like this type of an atmosphere because they will have a nice restaurant to go to when they come home from work. There will also be great access to infrastructure and for them to be able to get to and from work. He mentioned that he just met a gentleman, who is an intern at ESPN and who had just rented an apartment at Alterra because it is easy for him to get on and off of the highway, as well as that it is upscale there. Richard Vicino explained some more.

Richard Vicino said Town Center West will be a nice type of a product. All people see when they get off of Exit 23 now are open fields. Northeast Utilities had wanted to put two warehouses there. Every warehouse that Northeast Utilities builds has to be surrounded by barb wire, etc. and he said that he didn't want to see that there when getting off that exit so this is how they moved from Northeast Utilities putting warehouses there to retail originally and now retail plus residential.

Richard Vicino then passed a copy of the new concept for Town Center West out to the members of the Agency. (Please see the Third Attachment.) He told them that he had shown this to them on February 11, 2014. This will be the mix of residential and retail. This will be set up so that the retail can't exit out onto West Street because that would increase the traffic flow and that is against what DOT is finding acceptable. This has been approved by the Inland Wetlands Commission. They are presently in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission and they will be back there on May 21, 2014. The Planning and Zoning Commission wants him to submit another traffic study. He said there won't be a problem with this. Traffic has been followed for a year with the DOT. The volume of traffic will be dropped dramatically from the original plan of Town Center West so the level of service at all of the traffic lights will be much better with the new plan. He explained about the Inland Wetlands Commission making their decision to approve this plan. The impacts on the wetlands will be reduced and there will be more open space so this will be better for the wetlands. The same situation will be found when the traffic report is submitted.

Richard Vicino referred to the only other issue that is outstanding and he said they would realize this in the contract. He explained when he had first started this that there had been an offer to the Town of the utilization of approximately 4,000 square feet of a building on the Town Center West site but the Town Council chose not to do that. The Town Council had referred to another item that they would rather see done and this was with regards to the front steps at Rocky Hill High School because those had been falling apart. He said a plan was called for in the agreement and for him to negotiate out what would be acceptable in the plan with the scope of work to move forward by June 12, 2014. No plan had ever come forward until just recently because a bond referendum was done and Friar Associates had released drawings that had to go to the State for approval. There is a plan now as to what the front steps of Rocky Hill High School are going to look like. He thinks in the meantime though that Westmoor Concrete had gone in and fixed the stairs, which were going to be part of his item.

Richard Vicino told the Agency that he was asking for the approval of his new plan this evening and he wants to come back in a week and a half or two weeks to meet with them again with a proposal for an offer for him to take care of another item instead. He is working with a list of unfunded items that the Town of Rocky Hill has and he told this Agency that he can present these to them with regards to something that he can do in lieu of the front steps at Rocky Hill High School. Robert Britt asked if the stairs at Rocky Hill High School are out now. Richard Vicino said yes. He explained that the State will approve the Rocky Hill High School Renovate As New Project and it will go out to bid so he can't start interfering with what the State is doing. He told this Agency that they know some of the things that he has done and built for Rocky Hill. He enjoys doing more outside work and something that is towards the green side. He doesn't want to start putting ceiling tiles in, etc. He told the Agency that he knows that he can come up with something and he will bring this back to them as an item to discuss. He referred to the structure of the deal and he said that he will be bringing in as a joint venture, an apartment developer with him, in order to make sure that it will be a successful undertaking to do this. He told the Agency that all of this will be "folded into" their meeting the next time.

Richard Vicino said he didn't know if Ray Carpentino had a copy of the contract. Ray Carpentino did and he passed out copies of this contract to the members of the Agency at this

point. Richard Vicino told this Agency that they have been authorized through the contract arrangement by the legislative body to modify the plan and then it will still have to get all of the approvals from the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Inland Wetlands Commission.

Richard Vicino asked the members of the Agency if he could answer any of their questions or anything that was coming to their mind. Chairman Don Francis asked the members if they had any questions. Tom Beaudoin asked Richard Vicino if he was looking for approval of the plan from the Agency this evening. Richard Vicino said that was correct. This was for approval of the mixed use and the addition of the residential for Town Center West so that this can be moved forward through the process. Tom Beaudoin told Richard Vicino that he had mentioned that he has a partner who will be coming in with him. Richard Vicino said going forward that he will be bringing a developer with him as a joint venture. Tom Beaudoin asked Richard Vicino if he could share this with this Agency if they are going to sign onto this plan. Richard Vicino said he will bring this back to this Agency's next meeting. Tom Beaudoin asked if that would be too late if the Agency was going to approve the plan now. Richard Vicino said he didn't think so. He said the Agency was going to be approving the plan and he said that he could build this himself. He is going to show them the credentials when he comes to the Agency's next meeting so that they will have something. He explained that he is in the midst of contractual arrangements also so he thought it would be premature to say he has something. His Attorney, John Kindl, who is from Pullman & Comley, will probably be at the Agency's next meeting. Richard Vicino said he has to present an item because he still feels a responsibility that this will get done as a redeveloper. He wants to make sure that the credentials are there and that his due diligence is true and tested. He will present this to the Agency at their next meeting. He doesn't think that this stops him from saying that he is still the designated redeveloper and that he wants to modify the plans. This project is big and something this size is going to take an effort. He wants to start this almost immediately and get it under construction.

Tom Beaudoin asked as a point of information if a social amendment could be put on this plan as it relates to economic development. He asked if some type of social impact could be put forth on this project. He then asked if there is an opportunity with this project to have a certain percentage of Rocky Hill based business or Rocky Hill ownership that may come out of here with businesses having an impact on this project. Richard Vicino said he wasn't sure if this would be doable but he said that since the plan has changed that he has had calls from the operator of the Sheraton, etc. Everyone is excited about this and he has been talking to more local people about it. He is going to try to have as many local people as he can but he doesn't think it is feasible to say that he has to only have a certain percentage of local people. He then referred to the little Town Center that will be in Town Center West and he said a lot of people can go there to walk and sit without even doing any shopping. He is trying to create a sense of place. Tom Beaudoin said he understands this and he thanked Richard Vicino. Tom Beaudoin said he was talking about the building of this. Richard Vicino said local construction is mentioned in the agreement. Tom Beaudoin said this is his economic impact from a social side. Ray Carpentino confirmed that this is in the agreement already. Tom Beaudoin apologized. Richard Vicino said he does consulting for Alterra. There is Torello Landscaping from Rocky Hill that works there and the electrical company they use is from Rocky Hill. They push for Rocky Hill businesses. They are trying to get people who work and live in this Town to generate money for them. Tom Beaudoin said this answered his question.

Chairman Don Francis asked Robert Britt if he had anything. Robert Britt said he had a motion to make. Chairman Don Francis asked Vice Chairman James Ussery if he had anything. Vice Chairman James Ussery said he was all set. Chairman Don Francis asked Richard Vicino if they are looking at the changes with the apartments, if he is also looking for an amendment as far as Rocky Hill High School goes. Richard Vicino said this will be presented to the Agency because there is a list of probably three or four things that he is discussing with other Town people too. Robert Britt confirmed with Richard Vicino that he is doing this right now in lieu of the stairs for Rocky Hill High School. Richard Vicino said yes. He said he started doing this almost one year ago. He has been out to Elm Ridge Park to look at the pool. This is going to be toned down now because they have a budget with a lot of lines that are unfunded. The budget will be looked at and he will come back with something that is appropriate underneath the categories that he will offer to take care of. Chairman Don Francis confirmed with Richard Vicino that this will be something that he can handle and that will be in the price that he was originally talking about. Richard Vicino said that is right.

Chairman Don Francis asked Vice Chairman James Ussery again if he was all set and he said that he was. Chairman Don Francis asked Robert Britt if he had a motion.

Robert Britt made a motion that the Redevelopment Agency finds that the changes to the Town Center West redevelopment plan to reduce the office retail space footage and add its residential component is consistent with the terms of the Land Disposition and Redevelopment Agreement. The motion was seconded by James Ussery and adopted unanimously. (Patrick Dawson and Albert Levesque were absent.)

Before this motion was voted on, Tom Beaudoin asked if they needed to add a caveat as part of it. Robert Britt asked Tom Beaudoin what the caveat was with regards to. Tom Beaudoin said the change of the work (from doing the stairs at Rocky Hill High School to doing something else). Robert Britt didn't think they had to do that right now because this is in the original plan and there is going to be a substitution added to them. Tom Beaudoin said he had no other questions. Robert Britt confirmed that they are all in agreement that this is consistent from this theory. Tom Beaudoin said yes.

At this point, the motion was voted on.

Richard Vicino thanked the Agency very much. Robert Britt asked Richard Vicino assuming that he gets through the phases, what his estimation is from the shovel to the ground to completion. Richard Vicino said this would be July 2014. Robert Britt asked Richard Vicino when he thinks this project will be up and running. Richard Vicino said the first retail portion of 20,000 + square feet will probably be ready for Spring 2015. The apartments will come online in a two year period. There are only twenty-two vacancies out of one hundred and forty-four units at Alterra and he explained some more. He said this shows a demand for the young professionals and the seniors who want this type of living. The office building that is a component of this overall complex has just been started to be built too. There is quite a bit of interest already for that space.

Chairman Don Francis asked if there was anything else with regards to this. There was nothing.

Chairman Don Francis said on this meeting's agenda that they didn't have the approval of the Minutes for the Agency's meeting on February 11, 2014. He said that he would entertain a motion to have this added. Ray Carpentino said this couldn't be done because this evening's meeting was a special one but he said the Minutes can be approved at this Agency's next meeting.

4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ray Carpentino told them that he had a quick update on two properties that are of concern for the Agency. He referred to the Ames's property and he told everyone that he assumes they have seen the auction sign there. The auction company for Ames had come in about one month ago. The advertisement about this has been on the auction company's webpage for about one month and they just started a marketing campaign this week. The owner of that is selling his two Connecticut properties and his property in Massachusetts. The owner is trying to focus his efforts in the Brooklyn area so he is trying to get rid of all of his properties that are outside of that area. The opening bid for the Ames' property is \$1.65 million. This will not be an absolute auction so the owner can actually bid on this himself if he doesn't get what he thinks that he wants. Tom Beaudoin said the owner has a reserve. He asked Ray Carpentino why the owner can't just go to him to see if he can cut a deal because he has been talking with him for a number of years. Ray Carpentino said the whole Town has been talking back and forth with the owner and he wanted to know if the Town had wanted to buy it. Tom Beaudoin asked if this is what the reserve is and Ray Carpentino said this didn't say there is a reserve but it just states opening bid. Tom Beaudoin confirmed that the owner has a right to bid on this himself and take it. Ray Carpentino said that is right and he doesn't know if the Town would want to be a partner with the owner. Tom Beaudoin asked if the Town is going to possibly bid on this. Ray Carpentino said no and he explained some more. Chairman Don Francis said they had some takers for this property three years ago. Ray Carpentino said he had two entities in 2008. One of these was from the Boston area and one was from Manhattan. They had made bids on this property. He thinks the highest one was at \$4.5 million. He explained some more. He thinks if they find any other owner for this property that the ultimate use of it will be demolition and a rebuild.

Chairman Don Francis asked the members of the Agency if they had anything else to discuss with regards to Ames. The members had nothing else.

Chairman Don Francis asked Ray Carpentino what his second item was. Ray Carpentino referred to the foundry and he said that he got an update from Attorney Mike Romano. The silos are in the process of being tested for asbestos right now. The first series of tests came back negative. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) wants these to be tested every ten feet from the bottom to the top. Phase III and the remedial action plan are also being prepared for. Some selective vine cutting will be done this summer. They are looking at having this type of activity picking up in June 2014. There is still a ways to go with the Regulatory Bodies. Tom Beaudoin asked if testing is being done for PCB's also. Ray Carpentino said the silos are being tested for asbestos and everything in the ground will be tested for, for the remedial action plan of Phase III. Chairman Don Francis said a few people have asked him why nothing is being done there. Ray Carpentino said they are dealing with the State and the environmental assessments. This is going to take time.

Chairman Don Francis asked Ray Carpentino if this was the end of his report. Ray Carpentino said it was and he asked them if they had any questions. No one had any.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Don Francis asked Ray Carpentino if he had any correspondence and he said no.

6. ADJOURN

Tom Beaudoin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 p.m. The motion was seconded by Robert Britt and adopted unanimously. (Patrick Dawson and Albert Levesque were absent.)

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth
Recording Secretary